

spite of it. Grace under pressure—that is Christine Blasey Ford.

I expressed my gratitude that I think is shared by many in America for that great teaching moment yesterday. We should honor her by acting in a way that keeps faith with her honesty and bravery.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Iowa.

PROVIDING FOR A CORRECTION IN THE ENROLLMENT OF S. 2553

Mrs. ERNST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. Con. Res. 49, submitted earlier today.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the concurrent resolution by title.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A concurrent resolution (S. Con. Res. 49) providing for a correction in the enrollment of S. 2553.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mrs. ERNST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the concurrent resolution be agreed to and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The concurrent resolution (S. Con. Res. 49) was agreed to.

(The concurrent resolution is printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

Mrs. ERNST. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

NOMINATION OF BRETT KAVANAUGH

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I am here for my customary "Time to Wake Up" speech, but before I get into it, given the events of the day, I just want to express my satisfaction with the turn of events in the Judiciary Committee.

As the Acting President pro tempore may know, yesterday was a rather bitter day in the Judiciary Committee, with there being a lot of anger and tribal belligerence and a nominee who was full of partisanship and conspiracy theory and invective. It really was not a good day. Yet this is a funny place, and sometimes, right after we have been at our worst, something breaks that turns things in the right direction.

Something happened in the Judiciary Committee today, much due to the concerns and the fortitude of Senator FLAKE, so I want to give him primary credit. I understand the Republican leadership has agreed there will be a weeklong delay in the Kavanaugh vote on the floor and that the FBI will be given a chance to do its job and take a look at the allegations that are out there about his conduct.

This is not only a good thing for the Senate—because I think it releases a lot of pent-up pressure and anxiety and hostility—but it is also a really good thing for the process because the worst possible outcome would be that we would push this candidate through, that he would then get on the Supreme Court, and it would be subsequently shown that these allegations would have been, in fact, true and that he would not have been truthful with us about it and would have lied to the Senate. To clear as much of that cloud off of him as possible, I think, is good for us, good for the Court, good for the country—good for all. So, after a grim and battering day yesterday, I think we had a productive day today. I feel I earned my pay in the Senate over in the Judiciary Committee.

MISINFORMATION

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, what I want to talk about is a new form of political weapon that has emerged onto the political battlefield in America, and it is a political weapon for which the American system is not very well prepared yet. The new political weapon we see is systematic and deliberate misinformation, what you might call weaponized fake news.

Vladimir Putin's regime, in Russia, uses weaponized fake news all the time for political influence in the former Soviet Union and the modern European Union. Our intelligence agencies caught them using misinformation to help Trump win the 2016 American election. Some also is homegrown. In America, the original weaponized fake news was climate denial, spun up by the fossil fuel industry. The fossil fuel industry used systematic, deliberate disinformation to propagandize our politics and fend off accountability for its pollution of our atmosphere and oceans.

So, for both national security and political integrity reasons, we need to better understand this misinformation weaponry. Guess what. Science is on the case. A comprehensive array of peer-reviewed articles appeared last year in the Journal of Applied Research in Memory and Cognition and, I am sure, is on the Acting President pro tempore's bedside table for light reading. Dozens of scientists contributed to this report, and I list their names in an appendix to the speech.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that my appendix be added at the end of my speech.

What they found is interesting. One piece—tellingly subtitled "Under-

standing and Coping with the 'Post-Truth' Era"—describes how "the World Economic Forum ranked the spread of misinformation online as one of the 10 most significant issues facing the world"—the top 10.

"An obvious hallmark of a post-truth world is that it empowers people to choose their own reality, where facts and objective evidence are trumped by existing beliefs and prejudices," concludes one article—not a good thing.

This is not your grandfather's misinformation. This is not "JFK and Marilyn Monroe's Love Child Found in Utah Salt Mine." This is not "Aliens Abducted My Cat." This is not fun and entertainment. This is also not people just being wrong. Indeed, "misinformation in the post-truth era can no longer be considered solely an isolated failure of individual cognition that can be corrected with appropriate communications tools," they write.

In plain English, this isn't just errors; there is something bigger going on. Scientists from Duke University agreed.

"Rather than a series of isolated falsehoods, we are confronted with a growing ecosystem of misinformation."

In this ecosystem, misinformation is put to use by determined factions.

"The melange of anti-intellectual appeals, conspiratorial thinking, pseudo-scientific claims, and sheer propaganda circulating within American society seems unrelenting," write Aaron M. McCright of Michigan State and Riley E. Dunlap of Oklahoma State.

They note: "Those who seek to promote systemic lies" are "backed by influential economic interests or powerful state actors, both domestic and foreign." Let me highlight those key phrases—"systemic lies . . . backed by influential economic interests." Like I said, it is not your grandfather's misinformation.

An author from Ohio State writes that this creates artificial polarization in our politics that is not explained by our tribal social media habits. His subtitle, too, is telling: "Disinformation Campaigns are the Problem, Not Audience Fragmentation." He notes these disinformation campaigns "are used by political strategists, private interests, and foreign powers to manipulate people for political gain."

"Strategically deployed falsehoods have played an important role in shaping Americans' attitudes toward a variety of high-profile political issues," reads another article.

In a nutshell, Americans are the subjects of propaganda warfare by powerful economic interests.

So how is all of this misinformation deployed?

"The insidious fallouts from misinformation are particularly pronounced when the misinformation is packaged as a conspiracy theory," they tell us—insidious, indeed. By wrapping deliberate misinformation in conspiracy theory, the propagandist degrades the target's defenses against correction by

legitimate information. Conspiracy theories, the articles notes, “tend to be particularly prevalent in times of economic and political crises.”

Pulling emotional strings is another technique. Emotionally weaponized fake news is reflected in “the prevalence of outraged discourse on political blogs, talk radio, and cable news.”

These powerful interests also take advantage of “the institutionalization of ‘false equivalence’ in so-called mainstream media.” They sophisticatedly leverage media conventions to their private advantage.

Another tactical observation: To be effective, the misinformation campaign does not have to convince you. It can simply barrage, confuse, and stun you.

One of these articles related the Bangor Daily News assessment of falsehoods coming from the Trump White House: “The idea isn’t to convince people of untrue things, it is to fatigue them, so that they will stay out of the political province entirely, regarding the truth as just too difficult to determine.”

This, of course, is a well-known political propaganda strategy. What the Bangor Daily News saw, the researchers note, is “mirrored by analysts of Russian propaganda and disinformation campaigns.”

McCright and Dunlap describe how weaponized fake news—what they call “the intentional promotion of misinformation”—is made into systematic propaganda by amplification of what they call the “powerful conservative echo chamber.” It is systematic, it is deliberate, and it is supported by a purposeful private apparatus.

This brings us back to what the authors call the “utility of misinformation . . . to powerful political and economic interests.” What they conclude, basically, is that the weaponization of fake news is done for profit and with purpose. It has an apparatus of amplification. It needn’t convince but simply stun or confuse. Like an insidious virus, it can carry its own conspiracy theory and emotional payload countermeasures against the ordinary antibodies that ordinarily protect us from being misled.

The scientists urge that we must examine these systematic campaigns of false misinformation “through the lens of political drivers that have created an alternative epistemology that does not conform to conventional standards of evidentiary support.”

Let’s unpack that language for a minute. Let’s begin with the fact that it is “political drivers” that are behind the scheme. This is a tool in a larger battle for political supremacy.

To help win this battle, political actors have “created an alternative epistemology,” a separate way of looking at the world; obviously, a way of looking at the world that aligns with their economic interests.

That “alternative epistemology” is untethered from the truth. It “does not conform to conventional standards of

evidentiary support.” It stands on falsehood, on prejudice, and on emotion, not on fact.

What the authors call “post-truth politics” has motive and purpose. They write: It is “a rational strategy that is deployed in pursuit of political objectives.”

In these propaganda campaigns by powerful economic interests, some stuff right now happens a lot more on one political side. Scientists track an uneven distribution of emotion-ridden fake news and misinformation. They say: “The prevalence of outraged discourse on political blogs, talk radio, and cable news is 50% greater on the political right than the political left.”

Other authors write “if the political context were to change, we might expect the distribution of misperceptions across the political spectrum to change as well,” but for now, the weaponized fake news virus predominantly infects the political rightwing and modern conservative politics.

McCright and Dunlap writes: “The Right seems especially adept at using Orwellian language to promote their ideological and material interests via what we would argue are systemic lies.”

So who does this? Weaponized fake news is not cheap. It is not cheap to test. It is not cheap to manufacture, and it is not cheap to distribute. It is also not cheap to maintain a network to put weaponized fake news out there in a way that masks the identity of the economic forces behind the network. This takes money, motive, and persistence, and that means big industrial players.

What authors call the “800-pound gorilla in the room” is “a political system that is driven by the interests of economic elites rather than the people.” That is big economic elites playing a game of masquerade and manipulation in our politics. The scheme may look like populism. Indeed, part of the masquerade is, it is designed to look like populism, but that is what is going on.

The disinformation campaign is “largely independent of the public’s wishes but serves the interests of economic elites.” The populist masquerade is part of the disinformation exercise.

These economic elites take methods developed decades ago by one industry to use for another industry today. We see this in the fossil fuel industry—weaponized fake news about climate change—climate denial we call it.

The stakes are very high, with the International Monetary Fund calculating that fossil fuel exacts a subsidy from the American people of \$700 billion per year. To protect an annual subsidy of \$700 billion per year, you can cook up a lot of mischief.

Where did the fossil fuel climate denial mischief begin? It began in the tobacco industry’s fraudulent schemes to deny the health risks of tobacco. Did Big Oil shy away from those tobacco

tactics, knowing those tactics were actually found in court to be fraud? No.

Indeed, to quote an article: “The oil industry has worked to promote doubt about climate change science using tactics pioneered by cigarette manufacturers in the 1960s.”

To protect a \$700 billion annual subsidy, you can build a bigger denial scheme even than Big Tobacco, and they did. McCright and Dunlap call this the “climate change denial countermovement.” They say its message “may be the most successful systemic lies of the last few decades.”

They continue:

Briefly, this countermovement uses money and resources from industry and conservative foundations to mobilize an array of conservative think tanks, lobbying organizations, media outlets, front groups, and Republican politicians to ignore, suppress, obfuscate, and cherry-pick scientists and their research to deny the reality and seriousness of climate change.

Other authors write that “the current polarization of the climate debate is the result of a decades-long concerted effort by conservative political operatives and think tanks to cast doubt on the overwhelming scientific consensus that the earth is warming from human greenhouse gas emissions.”

“To cast doubt” is the key phrase in that last quote. The authors emphasize that “climate science denial does not present a coherent alternative explanation of climate change. On the contrary, the arguments offered by climate denial are intrinsically incoherent. Climate-science denial is therefore best understood not as an alternative knowledge claim but as a political operation aimed at generating uncertainty in the public’s mind in order to preserve the status quo.”

How did that play out in Republican policymaking? “[W]hile climate change used to be a bipartisan issue in the 1980s, the Republican party has arguably moved from evidence-based concern to industry-funded denial.”

Let’s be clear. Climate denial is not a search for truth. As the evidence piled up that early climate change warnings were accurate, the climate denial campaign did not relent in the face of those facts. Indeed, the scientists relate, “the amount of misinformation on climate change has increased in proportion to the strength of scientific evidence that human greenhouse gas emissions are altering the Earth’s climate.”

It is a fossil fuel upgrade of the fraudulent Big Tobacco strategy. One example is the so-called Oregon Petition, a bogus petition urging the U.S. Government to reject the 1997 Kyoto Protocol on global warming. One article points out that “the Oregon Petition is an example of the so-called ‘fake-experts’ strategy that was pioneered by the tobacco industry in the 1970s and 1980s.”

Of course, since this scheme isn’t real science, it doesn’t use real scientific outlets. “[M]uch of the opposition to

mainstream climate science, like any other form of science denial, involves non-scientific outlets such as blogs.”

Another article notes that this is done on “websites that obfuscate their sponsor by mimicking the trappings of nonprofits and other more trusted sites.” Again, masquerade—even camouflage—is part of the problem. I think it goes without saying that in real science it is not necessary to mask the real proponent.

Another signal of the scheme is repetition of falsehood. “Dozens of studies document an illusory truth effect whereby repeated statements are judged truer than new ones.”

In real science, when someone realizes what they are saying is wrong, they stop saying it. In the weaponized disinformation scheme, you just keep saying it. You maybe even say it more to capitalize on this “illusory truth effect.”

This, of course, recalls the infamous Big Tobacco declaration: “Doubt is our product.” That is a quote from a tobacco memo.

The heart of the fossil fuel industry’s scheme is to undermine legitimate science with false doubts. To chip away at the scientific consensus on climate change, they chip away at the foundations of truth itself.

One author sees this as “the willingness of political actors to promote doubt as to whether truth is ultimately knowable”—think of the President’s lawyer, Giuliani, saying “truth isn’t truth”—or “whether empirical evidence is important”—think of climate denial trying to drown out the truth through repetition of false statements—third, “and whether the fourth estate has value”—think of the President attacking the legitimate media as “fake news” and the “enemy of the people.”

The scientific paper concludes: “Undermining public confidence in the institutions that produce and disseminate knowledge is a threat to which scientists must respond.”

Sadly, real science is poorly adapted to defending itself against weaponized disinformation in the public arena.

Let me conclude with what one article calls a case study in the spread of misinformation. Last year’s “Unite the Right” rally in Charlottesville, VA, which led to the murder of Heather Heyer, killed by a White supremacist speeding into a crowd, a witness recorded on film the car plowing into that crowd of people. The authors wrote: “Within hours, conspiracy theories began floating around the internet among people associated with the alt-right,” attempting to undermine and discredit the witness. Social media posts then appeared “suggesting [the driver] staged the attack, was trained by the CIA, and funded by either George Soros, Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama or the global Jewish mafia. . . . [T]hose conspiracy theories migrated into more mainstream media. Variations appeared on info wars and

Shawn Hannity’s show on Fox.” FOX News, by the way, is a common venue for fake news.

Here is what the scientists chronicle as the “Fox News effect”:

It has repeatedly been shown that people who report that they source their news from public broadcasters become better informed the more attention they report paying to the news, whereas, the reverse is true for self-reported consumers of FOX News. . . . [F]or self-reporting viewers of Fox News . . . increasing frequency of news consumption is often associated with an increased likelihood that they are misinformed about various issues.

In a nutshell, the more you watch real news, the more you know; the more you watch FOX News, the less you know—great for the elite merchants of doubt.

The effects of misinformation become measurable by looking at provable falsehoods that people are made to believe.

[A] 2011 poll showed that 51 percent of Republican primary voters thought that then-president Obama had been born abroad. . . . [Twenty percent] of respondents in a representative U.S. sample have been found to endorse the proposition that climate change is a hoax perpetrated by corrupt scientists. The idea that the Democratic Party was running a child sex ring was at one point believed or accepted as being possibly true by nearly one-third of Americans and nearly one-half of Trump voters.

All provably false. All propagated until significant numbers of people believed.

So how do we fight back? The researchers offer an array of approaches. “Russian propaganda can be ‘digitally contained’ by supporting media literacy and source criticism,” says one.

“Our recommendation,” wrote another, “is to begin by generating a list of the skills required to be a critical consumer of information.” In essence, we have to adapt new citizenship skills to protect ourselves from weaponized fake news.

Another recommendation is to teach people about the tactic of sewing doubt through disinformation. Where “typical cues for credibility have been hijacked,” understanding the tactics will help inoculate people against being taken in by the scheme.

The researchers reported:

Participants read about how the tobacco industry in the 1970s used “fake experts”—people with no scientific background, or doctors and scientists with beliefs unrepresentative of the rest of the scientific community—to create the illusion of an ongoing debate about smoking’s negative health consequences. Participants who read about the “fake experts” type of argument were less affected when later reading a passage on climate change that quoted a scientist who referred to “climate change. . . . [as] still hotly debated among scientists.”

Other authors argued that a comprehensive approach will be needed to debunk climate denial. They note that “climate denial typically masquerades as ‘pro-science’ skepticism and paints the actual science of climate change as being ‘corrupt’ or ‘post-moderate.’ It is possible that those carefully crafted

forms of misinformation will require continued human debunking as well as increased media literacy.”

Last, there is a role for the media. “At present,” authors point out, “many representatives of think tanks and corporate front groups appear in the media without revealing their affiliations and conflicts of interest. This practice must be tightened, and rigorous disclosure of all affiliations and interests must take center stage in media reporting.” Again, once you out the participants and show the scheme, people can figure it out for themselves.

Recommended media reforms include a “counter fake news editor [to] highlight disinformation” or a “[r]ating system for disinformation” or “a Disinformation Charter.”

Science itself is beginning to examine the growing threat of misinformation in American society, which is appropriate since science is so often the target of weaponized misinformation campaigns. More and more, real science must face up to the fact that a new predator roams its territory and adapt new defenses against this predator. The predators may not want to defeat all science. They probably still want to use their iPhones and drive cars and live in safe buildings and enjoy products and services that science gives us. But they do seek to defeat whatever science challenges the economic interests that fund them.

As I said at the start, the Journal of Applied Research in Memory and Cognition is not exactly grocery-store checkout-line reading. Few Americans have read this volume. I am probably the only one in Congress. But its message is important, and that is why I came to the floor to share it today.

Campaigns of lies are dangerous things, like an evil virus in the body politic, and if we want to be a healthy country, we will have to defeat the weaponized disinformation virus. Curing our body politic of the ongoing fraud of climate denial would be a very good start.

I note the deputy majority leader is here on the floor. I apologize for continuing my speech while he is here. I appreciate his productive role in the happy events that I described at the beginning of these remarks.

Before the Senator from Texas takes the floor, I ask unanimous consent that the appendix I referenced be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

Sources: Journal of Applied Research in Memory and Cognition, Volume 6, Issue 4 (December 2017)

Letting the Gorilla Emerge From the Mist: Getting Past Post-Truth By Stephan Lewandowsky (George Mason University, University of Bristol), John Cook (George Mason University) & Ullrich Ecker (University of Western Australia).

A Call to Think Broadly about Information Literacy By Elizabeth J. Marsh & Brenda W. Yang (Duke University)

Combating Misinformation Requires Recognizing Its Types and the Factors That Facilitate Its Spread and Resonance By Aaron

M. McCright (Michigan State) Riley E. Dunlap (Oklahoma State)

Beyond Misinformation: Understanding and Coping with the “Post-Truth” Era By Stephan Lewandowsky (GMU, University of Bristol), Ulrich Ecker (University of Western Australia), and John Cook (George Mason University)

Misinformation and Worldviews in the Post-Truth Information Age: Commentary on Lewandowsky, Ecker, and Cook By Ira E. Hyman (Western Washington University), & Madeline C. Jalbert (University of Southern California)

Routine Processes of Cognition Result in Routine Influences of Inaccurate Content By David N. Rapp & Amalia M. Donovan (Northwestern University)

The “Echo Chamber” Distraction: Disinformation Campaigns are the Problem, Not Audience Fragmentation By R. Kelly Garrett (Ohio State University)

Leveraging Institutions, Educators, and Networks to Correct Misinformation: A Commentary on Lewandowsky, Ecker, and Cook By Emily K. Vraga (George Mason University) & Leticia Bode (Georgetown University)

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

NOMINATION OF BRETT KAVANAUGH

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, as the world knows by now, yesterday we had another hearing on the nomination of Judge Brett Kavanaugh to be a member of the U.S. Supreme Court. It was necessary to do so because an allegation had been made by Dr. Christine Ford to the ranking member, our friend Senator FEINSTEIN from California, dated July 30, but because Dr. Ford requested confidentiality and she wanted to remain anonymous, none of this was brought to anybody's attention until some time after the judge's original confirmation hearing occurred. The judge visited with 60-plus Members of the Senate, including the ranking member, and it was never mentioned to him. No questions were asked about it.

Contrary to her wishes, Dr. Ford was thrust into the national spotlight. She said she didn't agree to have her letter released to the press. She did not consent to having her identity revealed. She did not want to be part of what has turned into a three-ring circus. But, once there, when she asked to tell her story, we consented to doing that, and yesterday we heard from Dr. Ford as well as Judge Kavanaugh.

Judge Kavanaugh asked to be heard to clear his good name and speak directly to the American people, and he did so forcefully yesterday.

Now we have heard Dr. Ford's story, and we have heard Judge Kavanaugh's rebuttal. What we have learned is that there is no evidence to corroborate Dr. Ford's allegation. All of the people she said were there on the occasion in question said they have no memory of it or it didn't happen—no corroboration.

As we all watched Judge Kavanaugh defend his personal integrity in front of the Nation, we saw his righteous indig-

nation. He choked back his tears and aimed his fury not at Dr. Ford—none of us did that—but, rather, at this unfair confirmation process, which, frankly, is an embarrassment to me and should be an embarrassment to the U.S. Senate. To take somebody who has requested confidentiality and leak that information to the press and then to thrust her into the national spotlight under these circumstances, I think, is an abuse of power. But having made that request, once she was in the spotlight, we felt it was very important to treat her respectfully and to listen to her story.

I told anybody who would listen that I wanted to treat Dr. Ford the same way I would expect that my mother or my sister or my daughters would be treated under similar circumstances. Conversely, I thought that we should treat Judge Kavanaugh fairly, too, just as we would our father, our brother, or our son. In other words, this is more than just about Dr. Ford; this is about Dr. Ford and Judge Kavanaugh.

We heard the judge respond with quite a bit of righteous indignation, as I said, talking about his family having been exposed to the vilest sorts of threats, including his two young daughters. I know it was a hard pill for many of our Democratic colleagues to swallow to hear the truth of what this terrible process has resulted in, both for Judge Kavanaugh and Dr. Ford, but too much was on the line for Judge Kavanaugh to withhold his defense of his good name. After all, his reputation is on the line, his family is on the line, and his family, including his wife and his two daughters, are all caught up in what must be a miserable experience.

Still, I am glad we held the hearing, and I am grateful to Rachel Mitchell for participating and asking her probing questions.

Some have questioned: Why would a Senator yield to a professional in the sexual abuse field to ask questions of Dr. Ford? Well, it was simply because we wanted to depoliticize that process and to treat Dr. Ford with respect and gently, recognizing that somehow, somewhere, she has been exposed to some terrible trauma. But it was important for Ms. Mitchell to ask questions and to get answers to those questions so we could do our job.

I appreciate Chairman GRASSLEY for doing his best to keep order in running the committee efficiently, as much as that is possible. At the first hearing, after Senators would speak over each other and would endlessly make motions that were out of order—when one Senator said, “I am breaking the confidentiality rules,” I said, “This seems like a hearing by mob rule,” not with the kind of demeanor and civility that you would expect from the U.S. Senate. I think Chairman GRASSLEY has done the best anybody could do under difficult circumstances.

As I said, this hearing was not easy for either Dr. Ford or for Judge Kavanaugh. It has been painful for everybody involved.

Thankfully, we are much closer to a resolution on this nomination. Today, there was a markup in the Judiciary Committee, and I am glad we were able to pass that nomination out of the committee to the Senate floor.

Some are saying that we are moving too fast. To them, I would say that it is pretty clear what the objective of the opponents of the nomination is. Their objective is delay, delay, delay. Some have said that their goal is to delay this confirmation past the midterm election, hope that the election turns out well for them, and essentially defeat the nomination and keep the Supreme Court vacancy open until President Trump leaves office.

First, there was the paper chase; they needed more documents or, perhaps, they said there were too many. But the question I always had is this: If you have already announced your opposition to the nominee, why do you need more information? Unless, of course, you are open to changing your mind—but it is clear that is not the game that they are engaging in here.

Now there are those who demand that the background investigation be opened into two new allegations that appeared following Dr. Ford's. Today, the majority leader and some of our colleagues have announced an agreement to extend the background investigation for up to another week for these witnesses to be interviewed by the FBI. But I would note that the most recent allegations are so absurd, are so fantastic that not even the New York Times would run a story about Judge Kavanaugh's time in college as reported by Ms. Ramirez. They worked hard to try to corroborate her story by interviewing dozens of potential witnesses. None of them would confirm or corroborate Ms. Ramirez's story, but they did find, as Ms. Ramirez was talking to one of those individuals who was interviewed, where she admitted that she may have misidentified Judge Kavanaugh. In other words, she admitted that she may have the wrong guy—not credible, not serious, but dangerous.

It is dangerous in the sense that some of our colleagues take the position that all you need to do is listen to an accusation, and that is enough to make up your mind. You don't need to listen to the other side. As Judge Kavanaugh said, in Dr. Ford's case, it didn't happen; he wasn't there. If you listen to just one side of the argument, I guess it does make making up your mind a lot easier because you don't actually have to think about it and you don't have to think about what a fair process is in order to decide whose arguments you believe or whether somebody has met the burden of showing evidence that their claim is actually true.

This has become so ridiculous that the newest claims made by a young woman named Julie Swetnick, who is represented by Stormy Daniels' lawyer, are riddled with holes. Why would a